



African Journal of Social Work
 Afri. j. soc. work
 © National Association of Social Workers-Zimbabwe/Author(s)
 ISSN Print 1563-3934
 ISSN Online 2409-5605

Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Non-commercial 4.0 International License

Indexed & Accredited with: African Journals Online (AJOL) | University of Zimbabwe Accredited Journals (UZAJ) | SCOPUS (Elsevier's abstract and citation database) | Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) | Society of African Journal Editors (SAJE) | Asian Digital Library (ADL) | African Social Work Network (ASWNet) | Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) - South Africa | SJR | CNKI - China | Journal Publishing Practices and Standards (JPPS) | EBSCO | DOI

Environmental Social Work: African philosophies, frameworks and perspectives

Mildred MUSHUNJE and Abel Blessing MATSIKA

ABSTRACT

Environmental social work refers to a collection of strategies and methods used by social workers to solve or prevent social problems or facilitate development using the environment in a reciprocal and sustainable manner. Issues of environmental social work have become very topical due to climate change and the need for environment-driven development. Climate change is an increasing global threat because it is contributing to catastrophic environmental crises such as floods, drought, veld fires, and extreme temperatures and hurricanes. These result in more social challenges, chief among these is poverty. This editorial provides three frameworks for environmental social work in the Africa: the indigenous, continental and grassroots. This is followed by a discussion of the environment in social work. The third section summarises the articles that are in Volume 13 issue 2. At the end, a model for environmental social work in Africa is offered.

KEY TERMS: Africa, climate change development, environmental social work, poverty

KEY DATES

Received: May 2023

Revised: May 2023

Accepted: May 2023

Published: May 2023

Funding: None

Conflict of Interest: None

Permission: None

Ethics approval: Not applicable

Author/s details:

Dr. Mildred Mushunje, Zimbabwe, Email: mildredmushunje@gmail.com and Dr. Abel Blessing Matsika, Zimbabwe, Email: ablessingmatsika@gmail.com

Current and previous volumes are available at:

<https://ajsw.africasocialwork.net>



How to reference using ASWNet style:

Mushunje, M. and Matsika, A. B. (2023). Environmental Social Work: African philosophies, frameworks and perspectives. *African Journal of Social Work*, 13(2), 48-56. <https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/ajsw.v13i2.1>

Special issue on:

Environmental Social Work: African philosophies, frameworks, perspectives and techniques

Guest Editors: Dr. Mildred Mushunje, Zimbabwe and Dr. Abel Blessing Matsika, Zimbabwe

INTRODUCTION

Environmental social work refers to a collection of strategies and methods used by social workers to solve or prevent social problems or facilitate development using the environment in a reciprocal and sustainable manner. While the environment can be a solution to social problems, for example by being a source of livelihoods or providing space for social institutions such as homes to be established, if this is not done sustainably, the environment can become a source of social challenges, for example, overuse of trees, fossils or animals can result in them depleting. Issues of environmental social work have become very topical especially in the context of rising concerns related to climate change and poverty. Climate change is an increasing global threat because it is contributing to catastrophic environmental crises which result in environmental injustice. Africa is a continent that is unduly negatively impacted by climate change, when in fact, its contribution toward global warming is minuscule. Environmental injustice can result in changes in weather patterns causing floods, drought, veld fires, and extreme temperatures, hurricanes, floods and other social challenges such as forced migrations, poverty, and public health concerns. This editorial provides three frameworks for environmental social work in the Africa, the indigenous, continental and grassroots. This is followed by a discussion of the natural environment in social work. The third section summarises the articles that are in the issue. At the end, we offer a model for environmental social work in Africa.

BRIEF BACKGROUND

In countries that rely on agriculture, food insecurity is a crucial outcome (African Union, AU, 2022). Clearly there is a direct physical hazard that climate related disasters pose to humans. Disruption to eco-systems can cause infectious diseases, food and water insecurity; resultantly economic disruption or conflict related to resources shortages can impact on people's mental and physical health, mass forced-migration, political and economic instability, conflict, and social disruption. These impacts have very adverse effects on people and communities who are often ill equipped to deal with the associated challenges. Problems associated with the environment are a concern for social work as this also affects justice related to humans. For instance, if the environment is not protected and trees are cut down indiscriminately, whilst the environment suffers injustices in that it is not able to replenish itself, human beings are also affected by impacts such as climate change which is an increasing global threat (Alston, 2013) and a huge concern for social workers (Mushunje and Muchacha, 2018) yet, globally, climate change discourses are not so pronounced in social work education and practice (Noyoo, 2020; Chigangaidze, 2022).

Existing inequalities cause considerable differences between how different individuals and communities can respond to the effects of climate change (Alston, 2015; Nyahunda, 2021). Additionally, these issues will not have an even impact as the poorest and most vulnerable groups in society are threatened the most. As climate change multiplies and exacerbates existing vulnerabilities, the people most at risk include those living in developing countries, the poor, people of colour, indigenous people, those with chronic diseases or disabilities and women. It is also important to note that while developing countries produce the least amount of greenhouse gas emissions, they bear the brunt of the consequences of global emissions. The global injustice of a world in which responsibility for the causes of climate change is inversely proportional to the degree of vulnerability to its consequences calls for equity and social justice to be placed at the heart of a responsive agenda on climate policy and action.

AFRICA ENVIRONMENT FRAMEWORKS

Indigenous framework

The indigenous model comes from indigenous knowledge that was passed on from previous generations based on their experience and interaction with the environment. The model is grounded in Ubuntu philosophy (Chigangaidze, 2022, 2023). "Environmental social work can expand the profession beyond its boundaries. Similarly, Ubuntu is the philosophy that has the potential to provide global messaging for the interactions between human beings and their environment. Notably, Ubuntu is relevant in the components of human relations to nature, food security, climate change, natural disasters, sustainable development and eco-spiritual social work. Unequivocally, Ubuntu is a philosophy relevant to environmental social work...The importance of respecting indigenous knowledge systems such as Ubuntu has been underscored in the Global Social Work and Social Development Agenda 2020–2030. Overall, the indigenization of the profession of social work by infusing Ubuntu as a principle promoting social development requires social workers to be culturally sensitive and competent.

Environmental social work through Ubuntu connects with behavioural studies (how food injustice causes maladaptive behaviours), environmental sciences, clinical social work (e.g. the therapeutic role of animals and nature) and disaster management to mention but a few”, (Chigagaidze, 2023, p. 1).

Continental framework (The African Union (AU) model)

Africa is a continent that is severely impacted by climate change. To address this challenge, in 1968 the AU signed the African Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (AU, 2022). The Convention was revised in 2023. The AU’s current development program is the Agenda 2063 which has seven aspirations. One of the aspirations has a goal for “the establishment environmentally sustainable climate and resilient economies and communities” (AU, 2022). The AU says the environmental approach “.alternative approaches to development which seeks to integrate economic development with environment, human well-being, and socially-inclusive growth, thereby mitigating the risks which arise from environmental degradation” (AU, 2022, p12). The AU has many other initiatives, such as the Green Recovery Action Plan 2021-2027 which focuses on climate finance, renewable energy, resilient agriculture, resilient cities, land use and biodiversity. There is also the Strategy on Combating Illegal Exploitation and Illegal Trade in Wild Fauna and Flora in Africa aims to increase the level of political commitment to prevent, combat and eradicate illegal exploitation and illegal trade in wild fauna and flora. The Great Green Wall (GGW) Initiative for the Sahara and the Sahel is an initiative of the AU that contributes to poverty reduction through programs to address or end land degradation and loss of biodiversity. The GGW Initiative aims to support over 425 million Africans living in the drylands to embrace sustainable development practices that protect the environment and fight against hunger and poverty. In Agenda 2063, there is program called the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) whose aim is to eliminate hunger and reduce poverty by raising economic growth through agriculture-led development. A key agreement under CAADP is for each country to allocate at least 10% of national budgets to agriculture. In 2003, Africa Environment Day was founded by the AU, and it became Maathai Day in 2002 in recognition of the environmental work of Wangari Muta Maathai of Kenya. The AU also has many treaties on the environment. The AU model can be summarised as follows:

Figure 1: AU environmental model

- Using the environment to eliminate hunger, malnutrition
- Using the environment to reduce poverty
- Using the environment for economic growth
- Agriculture-led development, for example, increasing productivity and farm incomes
- Enhance resilience to climate variability through development of disaster preparedness policies and strategies
- Early warning response systems and social safety nets
- Funding for environmental work
- Rural development
- Improving agriculture research, technology dissemination and adoption
- Creating institutions focusing on the environment

Figure 2: Agenda 2063 environment-focused goals 5-7 under Aspiration 1

Aspiration 1: A prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development	
5.	Modern agriculture for increased proactivity and production radically transforming African agriculture to enable the continent to feed itself and be a major player as a net food exporter;
6.	Blue/Ocean Economy for accelerated economic growth exploiting the vast potential of Africa’s blue/ocean economy;
7.	Environmentally sustainable climate and resilient economies and communities putting in place measures to sustainably manage the continent’s rich biodiversity, forests, land and waters and using mainly adaptive measures to address climate change risks

In its work around the environment, the AU has several institutions and bodies, such as the e African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD), AU Inter-African Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR), African Union Inter-African Phytosanitary Council, (AU-IAPSC), African Union Semi-Arid Food Grain Research and Development (SAFGRAD), African Risk Capacity (ARC) Group and the Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment (ARBE) and Sustainable Environment and Blue Economy (SEBE) Directorate (AU, 2022).

Grassroots or community framework (The Maathai environmental model)

Professor Maathai’s work transformed families and communities. Maathai formed the Green Belt Movement (GBM) in 1977 to champion planting of trees, environmental conservation, and women’s rights. More than 50 million trees were planted in Kenya mainly by women members of GBM, and More than 900,000 Kenyan women benefited from her tree-planting campaign by selling seedlings for reforestation (Africa Social Work Network, 2023). The GBM models focuses on the environment/natural resources and ecosystems (education, conservation, protection, restoration e.g. tree planting and maximum use e.g. water harvesting and eco-tourism e.g. Green Belt Safaris (GBS). The GBM model is presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2: The GBM model

Green Belt Movement (GBM) Development model	
Aspect of development	Description
1. Pan-African identity	Training workshops, protection of culture and economy
2. Civic education and advocacy	Human rights, land rights and environmental justice
3. Environment/natural resources and ecosystems	Education, conservation, protection, restoration e.g. tree planting and maximum use e.g. water harvesting and eco-tourism e.g. Green Belt Safaris (GBS)
4. Gender and development	Improving livelihoods and advocacy

Besides planting trees, Maathai’s work also focused on productive and equitable farming, especially for women. She said:

In sub-Saharan Africa 100 million of people are reported to be food insecure and many countries in the sub-region depend on food imports and emergency food aid. Therefore, millions never have enough to eat, are undernourished and are suffering from parasitic infestations and diseases associated with malnutrition and poor sanitation. In such an environment, development is bound to stagnate. Poverty, poor health and sustained hunger become a vicious endless circle in which there is diminished productivity and

retrogression...Unfortunately, farmers are paid little for their crops and payments are often delayed. Therefore, many families sustain hunger and malnutrition in places where their own parents and grandparents had surplus food. Most of the available food in Africa is produced by women and children who provide the intensive labour required on small farms under cash crops. Except for the cash crops, agriculture and food production in Africa is still a low priority, political statements notwithstanding, with many farmers having sacrificed food production in favour of cash crops. At the same time, women's work (even in food production) is still rated low, is not a priority, has no prestige and women farmers are not adequately compensated for their labour. Governments give little attention to food production for home consumption (Maathai, 1995, p. 2).

The AU model and the GBM model are all very important for environmental social work in Africa. This is because they acknowledge the role the environment plays in improving people's lives, and more importantly in preventing social challenges. They view the environment as a tool to achieve justice for all, including women who are often marginalised.

Environment issues in social work

There is very scant information related to environmental social work although in the last decade there has been an increase in publications on the same but with limited application. There is also lack of clarity on what constitutes environmental social work which could also explain the dearth of literature. There is however, a harmonic chorus from scholars across the globe that compel social workers to address the crisis facing our natural environment (Dominelli, 2012; Gray, Coates and Hetherington, 2012, Mushunje and Muchacha, 2018). In a review of existing literature on environmental social work by Ramsay and Boddy (2017), it was noted that 99% agreed that the theoretical focus of social work must change to include the natural environment. There are different ways in which environmental social work has been referred and these include green social work, eco-feminist social work or environmental social work.

There are two chief theoretical camps that have emerged in social work to address environmental concerns and justice (Mushunje and Muchacha, 2018). These are green social work, developed and popularised by Dominelli and ecological social work perspectives such as environmental social work and deep ecological social work which have evolved over many years through contributions of various authors such as Gray, Coates and Hetherington, 2012). Mushunje and Muchacha (2018) note that there is an overlap between green social work and ecological social work perspectives. For example, they both strongly argue for the centrality of environmental protection in the social work agenda and other issues such as connection between spirituality and the care of nature (Gray, Coates and Hetherington, 2012).

Green social work on the other hand is a radical approach to environmental justice (Dominelli, 2012). Environmental justice is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people with respect to environmental laws, regulations, and policies. It is also discussed as environmental racism or environmental inequality. Ecological justice aims to address not only environmental issues but also the social pattern that underpin environmental inequities. Ecological social work is concerned with ecological justice. Ecological justice is a concept that concerns the entitlements of non-human beings, such as animals, to an adequate habitat. It includes social justice, sustainable use of natural resources, and putting the economy in its place as a subsystem within society and the natural world. It is imperative that social work practitioners be aware of humans' interrelationship within nature and humanity's ability to disrupt natural systems (Dominelli, 2012). This edition of the journal focusing on environmental social work is therefore timely as it seeks to contribute to the growing body of literature on the topic. The edition comprises of seven research articles focusing on contemporary diverse aspects of environmental social work as summarised below.

ARTICLES IN THIS SPECIAL ISSUE

Social work practice is intricately linked to social work training content and methodologies. The emerging emphasis on eco-social work requires an analysis of the current curricula to assess its relevance and capacity to adequately equip social work trainees for the current professional demands. The first article entitled: An Eco-Social Work Model for Social Work Education in Africa reviewed curricula of the Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) from 12 universities in four African countries and noted that the curricula were bereft of key concepts such as eco-social approach, natural environment, and ecology. To address the identified gaps in the curricula the paper proposes a model of an eco-social work course for African undergraduate social work education. This

proposed model borrows from international social work practices, ongoing studies on sustainability and existing relevant Afro-centric literature. The model emphasises the importance of eco-social field education through placing students in organizations (e.g., cooperatives), circular economy organizations, climate advocacy/activism movements, and others. The model also suggests an alternative assessment approach that will require students to write research papers on eco-social organizations, indigenous sustainability practices; compile practicum reports on eco-social initiatives and design proposals for eco-social projects.

Environmental disasters impact the general populace and social workers find themselves at the forefront of disaster response. The second paper entitled *Directions in Constructing a Body of Knowledge in Eco-Social Work Education and Practice in Uganda: Actions, Channels, and Implications* utilised a qualitative inquiry and case study design to identify a collection of recent environmental disasters and events experienced in Uganda to illustrate that environment linked social problems are of concern to social work. The authors argue that the country's largely agrarian welfare system and its pursuit of sustainable social development urgently necessitate a reframing of social work scholarship with an emphasis on eco-social theory for social workers to gain competence, relevance and preparedness for actions and interventions that address environment linked problems. The paper suggests a number of channels as avenues for professional social work engagement. These include: the politics, policy, administration, advocacy, inter-professional collaboration, eco-social work research, and community channels of engagement. When activated, these channels could enhance the social work profession's visibility, relevance, and suitability in tackling environment linked disasters, crises, and problems that inflict Ugandan communities.

Climate change is adversely impacting many populations across the globe, however, children particularly those who live in the rural areas are disproportionately affected. The third paper entitled: *Climate Change and Vulnerabilities of Children in Rural Zimbabwe: The Case of Ward 14 of Bikita District, Zimbabwe* utilised a qualitative research design to investigate the impact of climate change on vulnerable children aged between 15 and 17 e.g. those from child headed families, single parent families, those who drop out of school and those being raised by grandparents in Ward 14 of Bikita District. The study participants were children aged of 15 to 17 who resides in ward 14 of Bikita District. Parts of Bikita District fall under ecological region three which makes it susceptible to erratic rainfall and droughts. The study is underpinned by the Ubuntu or *Hunhu* philosophy. The study noted that the effects of climate change on vulnerable children include dropping out of school, entering into child marriages, child labour, sexual exploitation, food insecurity, substance abuse among others. These vulnerabilities are in sharp contrast with the social justice values of Ubuntu which are fairness, love, compassion, equality and genuineness. The paper proffers a number of recommendations to reduce the vulnerabilities of children to climate change. These include raising awareness on the impact of climate change on children and families in rural Zimbabwe; mainstreaming of climate change in child rights policies and programmes in Zimbabwe and revitalising indigenous child social protection programmes such as the *Zunde Ramambo* and kinship foster care system.

Climate change is affecting Africa's food security, health, manufacturing industry, environment, wildlife and plants. The effects of climate change have a far-reaching adverse impact on human well-being and in many instances the call to respond falls on the social work profession. It is in view of the role that social work plays in mitigating the impact of climate change on human well-being that the 4th paper entitled: *Nexus Between Climate Change and Environmental Social Work in Africa* interrogated the relationship between climate change and environmental social work practice in Africa. The researcher observed that climate change poses a serious threat to human security because its consequences are detrimental to human development because of how it results in huge social, economic, political ecological and health-related issues. The effects of climate change impact human well-being thereby necessitating social work intervention. There is therefore an interface between climate change and environmental social work practice at individual, group and community levels. The paper argues that social work practice and education still lag behind in embracing the concept of climate change in their teaching and practice. There is a need for strengthening social work intervention in climate change discourse to reduce human impacts resulting from climate change. It suggests a collaborative interdisciplinary effort to ensure that social work practice and education incorporates aspects of climate change. Social workers through their regulatory and membership bodies can be effective agents for influencing social reform in Zimbabwe through inclusive public conscientisation efforts on climate change in Zimbabwe.

Agriculture in Zimbabwe is the backbone of the economy as most Zimbabwean people obtain their livelihoods from crop and animal production. Agriculture provides employment and income for many people in the country including persons with disabilities. However, as elaborated in the fifth paper entitled: *A Critical Analysis of The Challenges Faced by Deaf Farmers in their Participation in Sustainable Food Production for Nutrition and Health in Mashonaland Region, Zimbabwe* deaf people are a minority group in the agricultural population and their needs

either get very little attention or no attention at all from the ministry responsible for agriculture. The challenges faced by deaf farmers are gender specific with female deaf farmers facing more challenges than their male counterparts. The study is anchored on the Ubuntu theory and the social model of disability. Using a qualitative research design, the study identified communication barriers, attitudinal barriers, gender specific barriers, lack of provision of important information in sign language, exclusion in land distribution and exclusion from agricultural initiatives and policymaking. The study concluded that the challenges faced by deaf farmers in their participation in sustainable food production for nutrition and health are overlooked. There is need for government to embrace deaf culture practically and not just theoretically in policies such as the National Disability Policy of 2021. Deaf female farmers need to be given special attention as their potential to excel in farming is often thwarted by the view that their male counterparts are superior to them. Deaf farmers do play a pivotal role in sustainable food production but they are often limited by exclusion. Adoption of the Ubuntu philosophy has the potential to address the various forms of inequalities, stigma, exclusion, marginalization, stereotyping and discrimination and inculcate the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the mainstream agricultural society.

The advent of environmental social work has ushered in increasing awareness in social work that many of the problems that affect individuals, groups and communities emanate from the environment. There is also a realisation that societies have always had their own ways of knowledge on how to respond to and interpret climate changes. However, written indigenous literature on how people used to preserve the environment and ensure environmental conservation is very scarce. Most of the knowledge exist as orature. Social work as a profession sits at the point where humanity and the environment intersect and there is a view that a reconsideration of indigenous knowledge (IK) practices can contribute to sustainability of livelihoods. It is against this background that the sixth paper entitled: The Place of Indigenous Knowledge in Environmental Social Work in Zimbabwe posits that IK has significance at the micro, meso, and macro levels in social work practice. IK is crucial in environmental social work aspects such as animal and human health, natural resource management, preservation of food, water, and sanitation, food security, hunger reduction, and community resilience which the paper explores. Some of the selected beliefs and practices for environmental preservation and climate change adaptation that the paper interrogates include *ngano* (folktales) and taboos, *mitupo* (at times called totems), afforestation through collaboration (*mushandirapamwe* and *madhonka*), myths (*zviera*) and village meetings (*dare*). The paper is a call to action for social work educators and practitioners to acknowledge the potential of IK to tackle climate change and related problems such as food insecurity. The call to action is a departure from the common thinking that IK is primitive and ancient. The potential of community solidarity and the building of human relations through indigenous practices such as *Zunde Ramambo* cannot be overemphasized. Indigenous practices and myths have the capacity to protect the environment and arguably mitigated climate change particularly in view of the current threats caused by climate change on the lives of people and their livelihoods.

The increasing adverse impact of climate change presents a compelling case to equip social workers in the global south with environmental social work knowledge and competencies. Social workers can be equipped through mainstreaming environmental social work in training curricula, research and fieldwork practicum. The last paper entitled: Reflections on Integrating Environmental Social Work Methods of Intervention in Zimbabwean Social Work Curriculum makes the case for the necessity of facilitating environmental social work methods of interventions in social work teaching and frontline practice to capacitate response to community needs and issues. Social work by its very scope works with the most disadvantaged individuals, groups, and communities and the profession will inevitably be called upon to ameliorate the effects of environmental crises. The paper draws out the epistemologies of environmental social work and offers a conceptual framework to inform practice. The paper explores nuances towards greater embedding of environmental social work over matters relating to rights, responsibilities, harms, and benefits; what counts as human and ecological flourishing; and what kind of professionals social workers should be and become in confronting environmental issues. The paper proffers a conceptual approach that can be used to frame social work fieldwork during placements in settings where environmental social work can be applied for desired outcomes of overcoming complex problems emanating from climatic and socio-economic challenges induced vulnerability. The paper makes recommendations for embedding environmental social work in Zimbabwe e.g. the establishment of a national grouping or association for knowledge management towards embedding environmental social work; setting up a community of practice on environmental social work encompassing multi-sectoral and inter-disciplinary collaboration between academic researchers, practitioners, governmental and non-governmental agencies as well as through experiential learning in situ by undertaking field visits to locations in the country where environmental degradation is rampant for instance granite mining in Mutoko can immerse students into gaining better insights into harnessing environmental social work to support communities.

MODEL OF ENVIRONMENTAL SOCIAL WORK IN AFRICA

Having read the literature on environmental social work, including new works from the several authors who contributed to this special issue, we would like to propose a model for environmental social work suitable for Africa and other resource poor settings.

Figure 4: Model for environmental social work in Africa

Part of the model	Details
Philosophy	Ubuntu or <i>Hunhu</i> philosophy whose key components are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Importance of families, communities and society • The environment is an important resource for food security, health, wellbeing, social justice and economic development. • The environment as a heritage that should be protected for passing on to future generations • The valuing of indigenous knowledge
Frameworks or models	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continental level frameworks - African Union model • Societal or Country level • Community or grassroots frameworks - Maathai model • Family frameworks • Global frameworks
Perspectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate change perspective • Food security perspective • Environmental justice • Marginalised and vulnerable populations perspective • Social-economic disruption perspective • Spiritual perspective • Educational or curricula perspective • Global emissions perspective • Human rights perspective • The sustainability perspective • Policy perspective • Agriculture perspective • Livelihoods perspective

CONCLUSION

In this article, we have defined environmental social work as a collection of strategies and methods used by social workers to solve or prevent social problems or facilitate development using the environment in a reciprocal and sustainable manner. This is in line with the objective of social work, which is to address social challenges and foster social justice. Climate change results increase poverty, and make people susceptible to disease. As climate change continues its ravage of the earth, there will be more casualties with the majority being in the developing world, being the women, children, the elderly and those with disabilities; all these demographic groups are of concern to the social work profession. This special issue of the journal adds voice to the growing call for social work to utilise the environment to address social challenges and to ensure that challenges brought to humans by the environment are addressed. The challenge is for African social work scholars and practitioners to continue generating the much needed evidence to craft solutions that are fit for purpose.

REFERENCES

- Africa Social Work Network (ASWNet) (2023). Wangari Muta Maathai. <https://africasocialwork.net/wangari-muta-maathai/>
- African Union (AU) (2020). Our Aspirations for the Africa We Want. <https://au.int/en/agenda2063/overview>
- African Union (AU) (2020). Africa Environment and Wangari Maathai Day <https://au.int/en/wangari-maathai-day#:~:text=The%20Africa%20Union%20has%20developed,realization%20of%20sustainable%20environmental%20management.>
- African Union (AU) (2022). AU Sustainable Environment and Blue Economy (SEBE) Directorate <https://au.int/en/directorates/sustainable-environment>
- Alston, M. (2013) Environmental Social Work: Accounting for Gender in Climate Disasters, *Australian Social Work*, 66:218-233, DOI: 10.1080/0312407X.2012.738366
- Chigangaidze, R. K. (2023). The environment has rights: Eco-spiritual social work through ubuntu philosophy and Pachamama: A commentary. *International Social Work*, 66(4), 1059–1063. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.uow.edu.au/10.1177/00208728211056367>
- Chigangaidze, R. K. (2022) 'Environmental social work through the African philosophy of Ubuntu: A conceptual analysis', *International Social Work*, p. 2087282110733.
- Dominelli, L. (2012) *Green Social Work*, Cambridge: Polity Press
- Gray, M, Coates, J, Hetherington, T, (2012) *Environmental social work*, Abingdon: Routledge, <http://ifsw.org/get-involved/global-definition-of-social-work/>
- International Federation of Social Work (IFSW) General Meeting and the IASSW General Assembly in July 2014
- Maathai, M. W. (1995). Bottlenecks to Development in Africa Speech. <https://africasocialwork.net/wangari-muta-maathai/>
- Mushunje, M and Muchacha, M (2019). The gender dynamics of climate change on rural women's agro-based livelihoods and food security in rural Zimbabwe: Implications for green social work. *Critical and Radical Social Work*,
- Noyoo, N (2022). Green Social Work for Climate Change in Madhanagopal, D., & Nikku, B. R. (Eds.). (2022). *Social work and climate justice: International perspectives*. London: Taylor & Francis Group.
- Noyoo, N. (2000). Preparing South African social workers for social development praxis. *Social Development Issues*, 22(1), 35–41
- Nyahunda, L. (2021). Environmental social work practice. In V. Mabvurira, A. Fahrudin & E. Mtetwa (eds) *Professional social work in Zimbabwe, past present and the future* (pp 264-296). Harare: National Association of Social Workers of Zimbabwe.
- Ramsay, S. and Boody, J (2017). Environmental Social Work: A Concept Analysis, *The British Journal of Social Work*, 47(1), 68–86, <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcw078>